



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

NEWS RELEASE

SNAKE RIVER BASIN OFFICE

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LANDOWNERS TO RECEIVE GRANTS FOR CONSERVATION ACTIONS

As part of a continuing effort to work in partnership with landowners, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is distributing 48 grants worth \$5 million to projects in 28 states and Puerto Rico to help citizens conduct endangered species conservation activities on private property.

"From bog turtles in New Jersey to prairie chickens in Texas to waterfowl in Alaska, private citizens are making a difference for threatened and endangered species," says Gale Norton, Secretary of the Interior. "I look forward to building upon these relationships with private landowners to protect imperiled species."

The grants are part of the Endangered Species Act Landowner Incentive Program, an initiative established three years ago by Congress to provide financial assistance and incentives to private property owners who are willing to conserve listed species, as well as species that are proposed for listing. To date, the Service has made more than 100 grants worth \$15 million. To qualify for this program, landowners or other non-Federal partners must contribute at least 10 percent of the cost of the project in either cash or in-kind services such as labor or supplies.

"Much of the habitat for threatened and endangered species occurs on private land," says Marshall Jones, Acting Director of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. "That is why we need the direct involvement and support of private landowners to assist in our conservation and recovery efforts. These grants will help landowners who voluntarily come to the rescue of our nation's imperiled plants and animals."

Some highlights of this year's grants include:

- Falls Creek Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project, Idaho: A grant of \$400,000 to help restore streamflows in irrigated lands in the Pahsimeroi River drainage in Lemhi County. The project will provide habitat for bull trout, westslope cutthroat trout, and other fish and wildlife species. The Service will purchase irrigation pipe for landowners to use to increase irrigation efficiency, allowing restoration of stream flows to Falls Creek. Other project participants will purchase and install hardware such as fish screens, which will help facilitate fish conservation and ensure continued agricultural irrigation. The Service is a cost-share partner in this effort with the State of Idaho and private landowners.

- Karner Blue Butterfly and Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake, Wisconsin: A grant of \$157,260 will continue work on a two-year-old effort to protect two species. To date 178 landowners have contributed over 3,100 acres of habitat restoration and protection in Central Wisconsin. For example, landowners are planting lupine on their property, a favorite of the Karner blue butterfly.

- Colorado Cutthroat Trout Recovery, Utah: A grant of \$50,000 to help the Northern Ute Indian Tribe to conduct conservation efforts on 200 stream miles in the Uintah and Ouray Indian Reservations. Trout populations have declined due to habitat loss, water development projects, and the introduction of nonnative fishes. Actions that will be taken under this program include removing nonnative fish and limiting their future access to reclaimed streams, improving stream habitat by planting willows, creating spawning channels, and fencing riparian areas.

•Barrow Eider Conservation Plan, Alaska: A grant of \$82,000 to help a complete a conservation plan for two endangered waterfowl, the Stellar's and spectacled eiders. The Barrow region is the only know site of concentration for breeding Stellar's eiders in the United States. Working with the local government and the Village Corporation, which is the predominant landowner, the Service is devising a plan to restore and protect wetlands that are breeding habitat for the birds. This Plan also seeks to address the long-term cumulative effects of accelerating human population growth in the village where the population has doubled over the past 20 years.

The Landowner Incentive Grant Program is part of a broad effort by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to provide technical and financial assistance, as well as regulatory certainty, to private landowners to address the needs of threatened and endangered species with the need for economic development. For example, the Service is working on 40 "Safe Harbor" agreements with private landowners. Under these agreements, landowners who take actions to benefit listed species can be assured that these actions will not lead to any additional restrictions on the use of their land in the future if listed species are attracted to their property.

The Service is also developing 90 Candidate Conservation Agreements with private landowners and other non-Federal partners to take actions on private and public lands to conserve species before they are listed as threatened or endangered. In support of these agreements, recipients may be eligible to receive grants for fencing, planting, habitat restoration and other conservation activities.

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The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 94-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System which encompasses more than 535 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 70 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices and 78 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

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